TOBACCO.

How to Manage It.

FROM THE PLANT-BED TO THE WAREHOUSE.

By Capt. T. B. Davis, of Catawba County.

TOPPING.

In topping tobacco the end aimed at is to secure the greatest weight consistent with the desired texture, color and *body* of the leaf, which last means its toughness, oiliness and sweet flavor. With the experienced planter the rule is to top according to the constitution of the plant, but such a rule is too general to be of much use to the beginner, instead of which let him accept the following directions:

So soon and fast as the buttons or seed-heads of the plants show themselves, beginning usually about the 10th of July, they should be topped. It is better to wait until the seed-head appears, because the space between the leaves on the stalk will then have widened enough to admit the sunlight between them; it should, however, never be suffered to bloom.

At the first topping done in a field such plants as are ready should be first primed, that is to say, have their lower leaves broken off as high as four or six inches from the ground, and then topped at ten and only ten leaves, unless the form of the plant is very gross, in which case twelve leaves are not objectionable. At the second topping such other plants as are ready should be topped at nine, and so on down to eight and seven leaves at each succeeding topping, which is usually at an interval of one week. The reason for lessening the number of leaves at each successive topping, is to cause all the plants which were planted at the same time to ripen togther, this being a great convenience in cutting. To facilitate the counting of the leaves, the ninth leaf is the guide, the formation of the plant being such that after it is primed, the ninth leaf points always over the bottom one. It is important to take notice of this.

And it is important to bear in mind that to secure the desired qualities of the leaf, nothing is more necessary, and to the beginner more generally misunderstood, than the proper topping of the plant. To ignorance in this matter is attributable the greater part of the sleazy, weedy stuff which yearly gluts the market, and which is almost worthless for any purpose. For if the season is a generous one, the luxuriant growth of the plant tempts many to multiply the number of leaves. To all such let me say, that while everything is lost in body, nothing is gained in weight by high topping, it being a maxim among growers of shipping tobacco, with whom weight is the prime object, that eight is the maximum number of leaves for that purpose—that is to say, that the same plant, if topped at eight leaves, will weigh as much as if topped at any greater number. Nor is anything to be gained by high topping in texture or color, which, if the topping be such as I have directed, will, in this piedmont section, be all that is desired.

SUCCORING.

As soon as the plant is topped, it begins to put forth succors at every leaf, but more rapidly at the top, each plant bearing two and only two crops of them. They should be taken out cleanly as fast as they are long enough to be broken by the hand, for if suffered to grow and toughen a pocket knight will be necessary to remove them, at double the cost in time and labor. After a field has been generally topped, the succoring should accompany the worming, and ought to be repeated once a week. The ground succors to be taken away as carefully as those above, for they equally impoverish the plant.

DRILLING MINERAL FERTILIZERS.

The use of sulphuric acid in dissolving bone for fertilizing purposes makes the manure very corrosive to metal with which it comes in contact. There is usually some free acid, and this speedily forms a rust which it is almost impossible to remove so as to make the machine do good work. After every piece is finished the fertilizer box should be cleaned and the stirrers which distribute the fertilizer be taken out and rubbed dry. Many fertilizer drills are ruined by one season's use, when with proper care they should last for years.

Farm Notes.

BREEDING SOWS PROFITABLE.

A good, kind breeding sow, bearing ten or more pigs at a litter, will net more money proportionately to her owner than a horse or cow costing much more to buy and more expensive to keep. With two litters a year, a sow should double her value once every six months.

DESTROYING CUCUMBER BUGS.

Insect powder applied early in the morning will clear cucumbers of the striped bug in short order. Placing a cloth over the plants and dusting the powder on them under it will make it more effective. To keep them off if taken in time corncobs dipped in kerosene oil and left around the hills will do the work.

TWICE TRANSPLANTING CABBAGE.

To have strong, stocky plants of cabbage they should be twice transplanted, once in the seed bed and again when set where they are to grow. The severing of many roots in the first setting causes a mass of rootlets to form around the stem. When we find plants in this shape there is no difficulty in making them live.

WATER FOR SHEEP.

The idea that sheep at pasture will live and thrive without water to drink is a serious and costly delusion to many farmers. By eating when dew is on the grass they can get along with little water, but that little they require as absolutely as any other stock, or poor condition and poor wool will tell the story of their deprivation.

HARD FOOD FOR CHICKENS.

Many chickens become sickly because fed wholly on soft and moist food, which compacts in their crops. A change to wheat screenings or oats will remedy this evil. If kept in confinement gravel or coarse sand should be within their reach, as this is a great aid in promoting digestion. If the chicks are kept with a hen she will feed them small bits of sand occasionally.

MOSS ON FRUIT TREES.

Moss on trees is a sign of low vitality and poor culture. It is most common on old trees. Where thick it may be scraped off and the bark washed with weak lye. Then thorough manuring will cause new bark to grow and no more moss will appear. Rough bark on old trees, if not overgrown with moss, should not be scraped off. It serves a valuable purpose in some varieties for protection.

PREVENTING BEES FROM SWARMING.

In hives of improved patterns it is possible for the bee keeper to get at his charge at any time and remove superfluous queens. If this is done in time then swarming will not take place. Most agriculturists, however, desire one strong swarm early, and thus get two queens at work increasing the colony. After this, however, increased swarms late in the season are a nuisance and should be prevented.

WEEDS FOR SHADE.

The idea that the shade of weeds in hoed crops saves the soil from drying up is not so prevalent as it once was. It is sometimes urged even now, but only as a pretext for shirking, and should rank with the objections that Solomon puts in the mouth of the sluggard against doing necessary work, really based on his disinclination to do the work required. A weed uprooted serves as a mulch, but it is not advisable to let it get large enough for this use. It will do the soil more good to bury a weed as soon as large enough to be seen than to wait for larger growth. In the soil the moisture it has drawn from it will again become available for growing crops.

CORN FODDER FOR ENSILAGE.

The subject of gathering the ears of corn when the kernels are glazed and ensilaging the fodder is a matter which is attracting the attention of all who believe in the system of ensilage feeding, and it is one in which there seems to be the best economy. Warren Brown, of Rockingham county, N. H., in a recent communication to the Albany *Cultivator*, describes his method of gathering the ears and ensilaging the fodder. When the ears are well glazed they are broken off and thrown on the ground, the ears from four rows thrown together, two from each side; which gives an opportunity for the team to get around for the fodder. The ears are allowed to remain on the ground for five or six weeks, until the corn is ripened, and it is then husked. If the weather is wet the ears should be turned over occasionally, using a potato digger for the purpose. Very handsome corn was ripened in this way last Fall, and yet that season was one of the wettest ever known in southern New Hampshire. A very large amount of corn was planted in New Hampshire this year to be treated by the above method.

MOWING CLOVER CLOSELY.

It is very important that clover land intended for meadow should be rolled down so that no stones or other protuberances project above the surface. If the clover is heavy, as on good soil it always should be, much of it will lie down before being forward enough to cut. In fallen clover, unless the knives of the mowing machine are set low, the part cut the way the clover falls will leave long stubble. This not only wastes much of the hay, but reduces the aftergrowth. The nearer clover is mown to the root, the better the second cutting. In this respect it differs much from timothy or other grass.

DISEASES AMONG HOGS.

A hog is a very difficult animal to doctor. It is obstinate, and when this takes the form of refusing to eat it is almost hopeless. The prevalence of cholera among swine makes hog keepers naturally suspicious of every disease, and if one pig is sick, no matter from what cause, no time should be lost in separating the others by removing them at once to a fresh pasture. If a pig is sick look to the issues in its forelegs. If these are closed they should be opened at once. No hog can be healthy unless these outlets for the removal of offensive matter are running freely.

TETHERING COWS.

A cow tied to a rope has proverbially a poor chance to show her milk-producing capacity. Unless she has extra feed beyond what she can thus get, on an average we may add two to three quarts daily to her actual product in estimating her natural capacity. The tether should be changed frequently to give her fresh pasture, and especial pains ought to be taken to give her good feed during the night. In hot weather cows do much of their grazing at night and early in the morning, when the dew is on the grass. Cows yarded at night and not milked until late in the morning suffer most during hot weather. It is better to tether them out at night, giving them a good feed, and then yard them where they can run in dark stables to escape flies during the hottest of the day.

SHIPPING FRUIT.

Picking, Assorting, Grading and Packing for Market.

Extracts from Report of N. C. Horticultural Society.

The subject divides itself into three heads, viz:—Picking—assorting, grading and packing—and packages.

Picking requires judgment and care, and constant watchfulness if there are inexperienced or careless hands among the trees. If peaches be picked too green the price is materially affected. If left on the trees too long they are unmarketable, and become soft and specked. Just when to pick the different varieties must be learned by experience, and the only general rule that can be given is to take them when the delicate blush is beginning to spread from the cheek around to the sun shaded side of the peach, or the green on that side is turning to white. Some varieties, as Rivers for example, require great care and close watching, as their mature color is so little different from the green state, but to the practiced eye the change to their beautiful waxy tint will indicate their condition. It will also be noticed with this variety that their two sides seem to ripen equally to a more marked degree than most other kinds. If picked when the green side is turning to its delicate straw color, the sunny side will be found too ripe and they will not bear shipping far. They should therefore be taken when the sunny side may be still, at least partially green. Hale's also require care, being one of our most tender shipping peaches, and it is scarcely safe to ship them a considerable distance after the shaded side has entirely lost its green. Something depends on the season, too, as they will ripen more one year than another.

In taking fruit off the tree it should never be pressed hard by the fingers but be taken well in hand, the stem being between the second and third fingers, then by a gentle pull and twist, the third finger being turned under the twig, thus prying it off, as it were, it is parted from the stem very readily. Picking in this way, the peach is more sure to be clear of the piece of stem that is so apt to adhere to it in careless picking, and that frequently bruises its neighbor. The peach should be laid, not dropped into the basket which when full, is placed in the shade, to be taken by the carriers to the packers.

Assorting, grading and packing are parts of one operation, which I can best describe by giving our own mode of doing. In our picking shed, which is open on all sides so as to admit all the air possible in order to cool the fruit, we have a number of troughs two feet wide, five inches deep, fifteen to twenty long and say two feet from the ground, containing a layer of straw, covered by sheeting, to prevent bruising, into which the fruit is carefully poured, as it comes from the trees. At this trough the packers sit, sideways, two and two facing, with several baskets between them in which they place the various grades of peaches, say, specked, quite soft, slightly soft, small unmarketable and market peaches in two, sometimes three grades. The first four mentioned are thus divided for convenience in subsequent handling, as we have a home market for certain kinds. The division might not be necessary for others. But grading for market is of the utmost importance, and no shipper who neglects can realize the best results. Whatever grades and brands he makes he should conscientiously keep up the quality throughout the season. The reputation of his mark is worth much to him, as his aim should be to establish and maintain it. He must not be afraid of making his second grade too good.

In placing fruit in the packages care should be taken not to bruise by rough handling or pressure by the ends of the fingers. Experience will soon teach where to expect a soft spot on a peach, and gentle handling will discover it. If there, only of the size of a 3-cent piece, it is not fit for the New York market, but must go into another lot for Richmond, or some near point, where they are sold twenty-four hours earlier than in New York. Peaches defective in form should likewise be rejected. Care should be taken to pack closely and uniformly in crates. While it is well enough to place peaches so that those showing between the slats shall have the red side out, laying them in a close, compact line, the blossom end turned in same direction, (never put them on ends), it is by no means advisable to put all fine peaches in outer layers and the smaller ones inside for the cheat will certainly be discovered and will injure the sale of future lots of same mark.

When the crate is rounding full, the closer takes it in charge, if too full removing a few peaches just on the lid, and holding it down whilst he jostles the crate on the ground, settles the peaches all in place. Then filling up evenly to overfulness he nails the lid on, using some force to bring it down. While peaches will not bear much bruising by blows, they are elastic enough to bear considerable pressure, and unless this is used in packing they will settle so much in transit as to bruise by rolling against each other and reach market in bad order.

Packages.—The crate, in some shape, has heretofore been universally used, and will probably remain the standard package for all but fancy fruits. The size, as recommended by our association is, end pieces 6 x 13 inches, slats 22 inches long. We use a little larger, or Maryland size, having adopted it several years ago, and fearing to change to anything smaller to the possible injury of our trade. Of course every shipper has a right to use whatever size and shape he prefers but I think that something near the above dimensions could be advantageously adopted by all. I have seen some that measured, I should say, about 7 x 9 x 30 inches—so odd and unsightly a shape that I wondered any man would consent to use them. We find it best to use solid board bottoms and tops say three-eighths of inch thick, side slats of the same thickness, and two and four inches wide, the entire crate dressed on the outside and having the inside corners of slats broken. Such a crate neatly made (the finest material roughly put together is a botch), and packed as above indicated with fine peaches is beauty to look at—"good for sore eyes"—and also good for the shippers pocket. I would not think of using any crate but one made of dressed stuff, even for the commonest peaches we ship. The slight difference in cost is more than compensated by the increased price. I am referring now more particularly to New York. For that market it always pays to put up produce of any kind neatly and attractively—New Yorkers want fine fruit nicely put up, and are willing to pay handsomely for it. In some other markets appearance is not so important an item but prices are always in proportion to the exacting conditions of the market.

Last season we made the experiment of shipping in 12 and 18 pound baskets, with the most satisfactory results, and shall continue to use them in future for the finer grades. Fancy peaches we wrapped a la orange, but whilst dealers seemed to prefer them thus treated, I am not quite satisfied that it will pay as a general thing. A one-third bushel crate very neatly made of light dressed materials gave good results as a substitute for baskets but was more expensive. None but really fine peaches however should be put in baskets or fancy packages of any kind as any attempt to palm off inferior fruit in this or any other manner will surely result in ultimate disaster to the shipper, especially if wrapping is resorted he must beware of putting in anything that will lower the average quality of fruit.

Though not strictly included under the subject given me, I wish to say a few words relative to thinning the trees—it is of greater importance than is generally conceded. All admit that it will tend to enlarge the average size of the fruit left on the tree, but in addition to that I am satisfied it materially lessons the drain on the life of the tree. Nature works to perpetuate and therefore the maturing of seed is the great business of the season with her. The pulp of fruit which we want in greatest perfection is merely incidental in nature's economy but as whether she must mature 100 or 300 peach pits on one tree is very material to its vitality. This is a well known fact as regards flowers and plants and applies to fruit trees as well. If, therefore, we can get the same weight of pulp in better shape on one-third or one-fourth the number of pits, we are gainers and the tree also. What fruit is taken off must be removed before the pit hardens to be of much advantage.

Mr. Robert Watson, of Ridge Spring, S. C., is eminently successful in raising fine peaches. In the first place he prunes so severely every winter that a novice would say "that man is ruining his trees," whilst the experienced fruit grower catching the idea like a flash, will exclaim, "well, that is what I call intelligent pruning!" Further, he thins out his peaches until no two are less than three inches apart. That man had nothing but fancy peaches last season, realized as high as $15 per bushel and cleared $2,500 from eight acres.

I forgot to say, in the proper connection, that all rotten or specked fruit should be picked daily. Every peach that rots on the tree does it injury.

Before closing this article let me add a few words in behalf of the North Carolina Fruit Growers' Association. Although it has been in existence but a few years, has not many members, (and some of those only nominally), it has accomplished good work and if fruit men all over the State would give it the support it deserves and manifest but a small part of the interest in its work that they should feel and not stand back and see a few men do the work whilst they reap their share of the benfits there is no telling what the result to the fruit growing community would be. Last year less than a half a dozen members, having, however, the "backing" of the association, at their own expense of time and money, saved shippers several thousand dollars in a single item of freights. There is still much to be done in this and other directions, and if every fruit grower will become a member, pay his one dollar a year, and attend the meetings of the association, my word for it, he will it a good investment.

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